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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
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Working paper proposed by the Bureau of the Committee

A

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges that all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources of and their free access to information, recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process", should:

(a) Cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such

areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) Ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) Provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) Enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) Aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and the media, public, private or other, in the developing countries, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and the media, public, private or other, in developing countries, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) Provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

B

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

1. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information at its fourteenth session, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions:

(a) The United Nations system as a whole should cooperate in a concerted manner, through its information services and the coordination of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, in promoting a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities and potential of the United Nations system in all its endeavours, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, with particular emphasis on the creation of a climate of confidence, the strengthening of multilateralism and the promotion of the development activities in the United Nations system;

(b) Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information, the Secretary-General is requested to ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter, the priority areas defined by the Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information, so as to ensure an objective and more coherent coverage of, as well as better knowledge about, the United Nations and its work. The Secretary-General should ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(i) Cooperates more regularly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, especially at the working level, with a view to maximizing the contribution of the Department to the efforts of the Organization and expresses interest in the continuation of the practice of a comprehensive statement by a representative of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at each substantive session of the Committee on Information;

(ii) Enhances its cooperation with news agencies of and in the developing countries, in particular, the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Eco-Pool of the News Agencies of Non-Aligned

Countries and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as with other news agencies and intergovernmental and regional organizations;

(iii) Continues to disseminate, in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies, information about United Nations activities pertaining, inter alia, to:

a. International peace and security;

b. Disarmament;

c. Peace-keeping operations;

d. Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the light of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism;

e. The elimination of foreign occupation;

f. Human rights;

g. The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

h. The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;

i. Problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic cooperation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

j. The least developed countries;

k. The environment and development;

l. The campaign against terrorism in all its forms, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

m. The international fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking;

(iv) Does its utmost to disseminate widely and to publicize the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and the tremendous efforts of the African countries towards recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(v) Enhances the effectiveness of its activities and the dissemination of information on United Nations activities against the policies and

practices of apartheid, giving due attention to the unilateral measures and official censorship imposed on the local and international media with regard to all aspects of that issue;

(vi) Continues to disseminate information about activities of the United Nations directed at a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of international conflicts by exclusively peaceful means, as highlighted in the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization;

(vii) Continues to cover all United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, and current developments in that region, and reports thereon to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session, in 1993;

(viii) Provides, in situations requiring immediate and special response, the necessary level of information support for the activities of the United Nations;

(c) The Department of Public Information should continue its efforts in promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and in strengthening the image of the United Nations system as a whole and, in this connection, it is recommended that the Secretary-General should ensure that the Department:

(i) Continues to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all the material that it produces, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur;

(ii) Continues to apply, in the context of the review of its role, performance and methods of work, appropriate modern technologies for the collection, production, storage, dissemination and distribution of information materials, including the use of satellite facilities;

(iii) Considers expanding the programme of telephone news bulletins that are paid for by its users;

(iv) Continues its cooperation with those countries which have expressed readiness to assist the United Nations in resuming the short-wave broadcasts through their respective national networks free of charge and encourages expansion of such a type of cooperation with those developed and developing countries having recognized capabilities in this field;

(v) Takes adequate measures to resume taped radio programmes, which it has temporarily curtailed, if so requested by broadcasting stations;

(vi) Continues its briefing, assistance and orientation programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(vii) Provides, on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization about new forms of cooperation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the information and communication infrastructure of developing countries;

(viii) Cooperates with educational institutions of Member States and with educators and education policy makers, informing them about United Nations activities;

(ix) Considers, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the publication, in the Arabic and Spanish languages, of the annual press release containing the resolutions and decisions, and the results of the voting adopted by the General Assembly, after each annual session of the General Assembly;

(x) Ensures adequate daily coverage of United Nations open meetings in the two working languages of the Secretariat, reflecting the views of all delegations with accuracy and objectivity. The Department should also continue to cooperate closely with and provide assistance to members of the United Nations Correspondents' Association, taking into account their needs and requirements, especially in the area of press releases, press conferences and briefings, which provide them with basic information for reporting;

(xi) Uses the official languages of the United Nations adequately in its written and audiovisual materials and makes balanced use of the two working languages of the Secretariat;

(xii) Ensures timely distribution of its material to subscribers and to United Nations information centres;

(d) The Department of Public Information should produce and distribute its publications in a timely manner:

(i) The improvement in format and printing of the UN Chronicle is welcome. The Department is encouraged to continue to consider the interests of specific target audiences as it formulates its editorial policies and take action to expand its circulation in order to make it easily accessible;

(ii) Notes the report of the Secretary-General on the Yearbook of the United Nations and shares the assessment of the Secretary-General regarding unacceptable delays in the publication of the Yearbook. The Committee recommends continuation of the Yearbook and stresses the continuing importance of maintaining the strict editorial

independence, objectivity and comprehensiveness of the Yearbook, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session on the progress achieved in the implementation of the report, particularly as regards paragraphs 66 and 67;

(e) Taking note of the Secretary-General's report of 15 February 1991, and recalling his report on assistance to those front-line States broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa, requests the Secretary-General to assist to the greatest extent possible, those front-line States in pursuing their concerns in the light of paragraph 6 of the Secretary-General's report of 15 February 1991;

(f) The Secretary-General is urged to continue his efforts to secure a sound and stable financial basis for the publications Development Forum and Africa Recovery;

(g) It is recognized that United Nations information centres constitute an important means of disseminating information about the United Nations among the people of the world. Therefore, the Department should conduct periodic evaluation of the efficiency of each centre in disseminating information about the United Nations, through the national media, information and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. The evaluation should be used by the Committee to develop a broad framework in relation to the range of functions of the centres, taking into account the United Nations resources and the requirements of the regions;

(h) The Department should coordinate closely with other field offices of the United Nations system, particularly those of the United Nations Development Programme, in order to avoid duplication of work, taking into account the functional autonomy that the United Nations information centres should have. In this respect, in countries where no local United Nations information centre exists, the Department should ensure that adequate information about the United Nations is provided. In addition, the Department should develop a framework for coordinating the information work carried out by the United Nations offices and officers serving in those countries where no United Nations information centre exists;

(i) Recognizing that the United Nations information centres have been called upon to undertake tasks beyond their specific mandate upon the request of other organizations in the system, the Department should make every effort, where this is felt necessary, to seek reimbursement so that it can carry out the tasks without impairing its effectiveness in its specific duties;

(j) Requests the Secretary-General to study ways of ensuring a qualitative balance among United Nations information centres all over the world with respect to the discharge of their responsibilities, budget allocations for such centres, the deployment of resources, and services of specialists in the field of information, and to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

(k) Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at all sessions of the Committee on the budget of each of the United Nations information centres, including detailed information on the level of assistance being provided by the host countries;

(l) Taking note of the request for the enhancing of United Nations information centres in Tehran, Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura, the Committee on Information recommends that the Department of Public Information provide the necessary professionals and equipment where necessary;

(m) The Committee on Information recommends that, pending final discussions with the Secretariat, the General Assembly should consider approval of the establishment of a new United Nations information centre in San'a, Yemen. The Committee takes note of the requests of Costa Rica and Bulgaria to have information components in their countries;

(n) Stressing the need for coordinating the information activities of the United Nations system and recognizing the important role that the Joint United Nations Information Committee plays in that regard, the Department of Public Information is encouraged to continue its active participation in the work of the Committee;

(o) Taking into account the conclusion reached at the sixteenth session of the Joint United Nations Information Committee that the environment would presently constitute the highest priority issue suitable for inter-agency cooperation, the Department of Public Information should further pursue discussion of the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

(p) It is recognized that free distribution of materials is necessary in the public information activities of the United Nations. However, as demands increase and whenever it is desirable and possible, the Department of Public Information should actively encourage the sale of its materials;

(q) In view of the importance of radio programmes in developing countries, the Secretary-General is requested to enhance the efficiency of and to ensure full programme delivery by all regional radio units, namely, the African, Asian, Caribbean, European, Latin American and Middle Eastern Units and the Anti-Apartheid Programmes Section, including production of radio programmes called for by General Assembly resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983;

(r) All reports by the Secretary-General, as well as by representatives of the Department of Public Information, to the Committee on Information and to the General Assembly, in particular on new programmes or on the expansion of existing programmes, should contain:

(i) Detailed information on the output of the Department on each topic included in its work programme, which forms the basis of its programme budget;

(ii) The costs of the activities undertaken on each topic;

(iii) Adequate information on target audiences, end-use of the products of the Department and analysis of feedback data received by it;

(iv) A statement detailing the priority level that the Secretary-General has attached to current or future activities of the Department in documents dealing with such activities;

(v) Evaluation by the Department of the effectiveness of its different programmes and activities, with particular reference to the need constantly to review internal programme elements and activities;

(s) In order to facilitate continued contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, it is recommended that the Bureau of the Committee on Information, together with representatives of each regional group and China, in close contact with members of the Committee on Information, should meet, as required, and consult at periodic intervals with the Department of Public Information;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations relating to the activities of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the budgetary procedures as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, 42/211 of 21 December 1987, 43/213 of 21 December 1988, 44/200 B of 21 December 1989, 45/254 of 21 December 1990 and 46/186 of 20 December 1991, and taking into account the priorities set by the Assembly;

3. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fourteenth session, in 1992, on the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992;

4. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session, in 1993, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

5. Invites Member States to submit to the Secretary-General, by 1 October 1992, observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling the developing countries to develop their own information and communication capacities, freely and independently, and further requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

6. Urges the Committee on Information, through its Bureau and the representatives of each regional group and China, to work in close contact with the Joint United Nations Information Committee in order to facilitate

United Nations information system cooperation and coordination in informing the peoples of the world of the Organization's aims and activities and requests the Secretary-General to submit reports of the Joint United Nations Information Committee to the consecutive sessions of the Committee on Information;

7. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

8. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session;

9. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-eighth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".